

## Steps to Organizing a Successful Plant Swap

“Gardeners, generous as a rule, are often reluctant to dig out and banish to the compost pile their extra plants. Many have discovered the great joy gained when sharing what grows in their gardens. Plant swaps are a fun, organized way to share this abundance.”

### 1. Find a Venue

Find a room or outdoor space large enough for people to meet and set out their plants. Make arrangements to reserve the space, if necessary.

### 2. Choose a Date and Time

- Plant swaps are great to hold in both the Spring and Fall.
- Perhaps poll your audience with two or three possible dates, to find a date that works best for the majority.
- Allow 2 to 4 hours for a swap. Two hours is the minimum amount of time needed for set up, the plant exchange, and clean up. Four hours allows time for visiting, perhaps sharing lunch or a potluck meal.

### 3. Promote the Swap

Get the word out. Here are some suggestions:

- Create and hang a poster.
- Create postcard invitations and distribute in mailboxes.
- Add the Swap to your agency’s calendar.
- Submit your Swap details to your agency’s intranet editor.
- In your materials, you will want to answer who, what, when and where.
- (Please see a sample announcement from the MDH garden club at the end of this document.)
- Here are some other suggestions to communicate to those who are donating plants to the swap:
- Please bring only healthy plants. An exception can be made if the plant’s condition is made known and accepted by someone willing to give it TLC.
- If possible, label your plants with their botanic and common name, and your name. Contact information is helpful when care questions arise. Pencil works better than pen because it doesn’t smear when wet. Popsicle sticks work well and are reasonably inexpensive. Snipped pieces of plastic margarine tubs and old mini-blinds are also good sources of plant tags (plus they are free!). Whatever you use, make sure the information is legible.
- If you are bringing plants to trade, please don’t water them immediately before the event.
- It makes the pots heavier and increases the chances of them leaking and making a mess in someone’s car.
- Everyone values already-rooted plants over fresh cuttings. It’s a good idea to start rooting your cuttings a few weeks before the event.



#### 4. Set-Up

Here is a list of supplies you will want to prepare for your Swap:

- Wagon or cart – for hauling plants and supplies from the car to the event
- Paper towels & Ziploc baggies – you can get the towels wet and wrap them around cuttings or bare root plants and secure them in the Ziploc baggies to protect them until you get home. Ziploc baggies are also great for handling seeds.
- Permanent marker and sticky labels – for marking Ziploc baggies or pots to identify new plants
- Newspaper – to lie over the tables to prevent them from getting dirty. Also good for transporting plants in your car
- Pen/pencil and paper – for taking notes on plant care or jotting down names and phone numbers of the people you meet
- Spray bottle with water – for the plants, especially on hot, sunny days.
- Bug repellent – depending upon your locale and time of year, mosquito repellent can be a necessity

#### 5. Let the Swap Begin

Begin the exchange first for those who have brought plants. Once that is completed, open trading can begin.

#### Sample Swap Schedule:

8-10 a.m.	Bring plants to swap room
10:30-11:30 a.m.	Plant exchange between those who have brought plants
11:30 a.m.-12 p.m.	Swap opens to all others who are interested
12 p.m.	Potluck (optional, of course)

#### Sample Swap Announcement:

#### MDH Four Seasons Garden Club (FSGC) Plant Swap

##### Mark your calendars!

The Four Seasons Garden Club (FSGC) invites all MDH employees to their semi-annual plant swap Tuesday, September 18.

This is an excellent way to start a new garden or to enhance an existing one. All plants are free! Swaps will be held in two buildings:

Freeman, Room B361 - Coordinator (to be determined)

Golden Rule, Room 223 - Coordinator (to be determined)

##### Swap schedule:

8-10 a.m.	Bring plants to swap room
11-11:30 a.m.	FSGC members and non-members who bring plants participate
11:30 a.m.-12 noon	FSGC members who do not bring plants participate
12 noon-12:30 p.m.	All non-contributing, non-members participate

Please bring swap items in individually labeled containers. You must include the plant name and your name. If possible, include the height, spacing, flower color, light requirements and special instructions. Please do not water the plants the morning of the swap.